

Tilghman Island
Maryland 21671
August 5, 1972
(my sister's
birthday)

Dear Joe,

The postcard from the London museum, which you seem to have mailed at Upper Holloway (any relation to Stanley Holloway whom I saw as Mr Doolittle in Pygmalion about twenty-five (30?) years ago?), shows the map of London by Frans Hegenberg, 1574, a map which is of an age, and not for all time, and being limited to three spatial dimensions, it ignores temporal transitions, Spenserian mutability, and emerges as a curiosity, eliciting responses of sentimental more than intellectual feelings; and any three-dimensional map is going to be quasi-aesthetic, that is, illustrating a style with implications for meanings which cannot be adequate to the reality (because the reality is transitions); so there is the problem of accomodating the implications of that style to your style (as in any quotation: read Marianne Moore as accomodated implications); and the problem that a map is to a place as one frame is to a movie, or a map is to a place as a snapshot is to a movie. My favorite maps today are the time-lapse radar maps shown in the weather-report on television, where storm fronts advance abruptly across the latitudes. The map quotation from Barthes is of course a joke, one of his attempts to produce an intellectual vertigo with some infinite regress. Maps do not require their presence on themselves, they are not endlessly autotelic. The interest of maps is the rules of mapping, the stylization; those rules are obvious to us in conventional maps, but anything can be mapped to represent anything else, as long as the rules are spelled out somewhere. Maybe what I am wondering is 1. if you have conventional mapping, what are the implications of those conventions and 2. if you have unconventional mapping, where are you going to put those rules, what will their implications be, and how will those implications combine with the style that rules the implications of Lookout Cartridge? Maps smuggle meanings: I remember Mayor Daley saying that the Yippies had maps of Chicago, as though that proved their malevolent intentions (or as though they were aliens).

Callinish looks rawer than Stonehenge: whence the name? You know I pursue a theory that Coll (as in Nun's Priest's Tale colle-fox) means priest, then or simultaneously magician, then deceitful/tricky. Chaucer mentions Colle Tregetour, and there is a Welsh magician named Coy Ath Mawfry (from memory) in a French book, and I take coy to be Frenchified colle. Can you find, in London, Harold Bayley, The Lost Language of London? I'd pay 10 or 15 American \$s for it. Bayley knows what to make of Old King Cole; unlike your Hawkins, he is wrong in the right spirit.

I read Walker Percy, Love in the Ruins, which as the memoirs of a "bad Catholic" has the maddening smugness of a narrator who "knows" all the Graham Greene-ish convolutions and dialectics of spiritual life, and so can condescend as one can only condescend when one knows the Absolute, and at the same time be not only worldly, but even worse than the rest of us precisely because of the knowledge of the absolute in the light of which he must judge himself. It seems somehow snobbish for him to carry on about sexual intercourse as a sin, about on a level with Tom Wolfe's buttons on jacket sleeves that button and unbutton, the archness of the obsolete and unfashionable used to isolate but also to elevate one. The worst moment is (because Percy must know that in the Church sexual sins are trivial) when Percy has the dying young daughter ("Dickens, thou shouldst be living...") warn her father against the greatest sin of all, refusing the grace of God; as Wilde said, One would have to have a heart of stone not to laugh at the death of Little Nell; or words to that effect. I think Percy escapes the problems by putting everything in the point of view (perspective) of the narrator; why not, if there are objective truths, report in the light of them? I think his strategy of facts & theories relative to the narrator is out of focus with his religion in which the facts and theories are not relative. He does a beautiful paragraph of description, geometric vs. sentimental place: "Leaving the coordinate of the motel with standard doors and carpets and plumbing, leaving the interstates extending infinitely in all directions, abscissa and ordinate, descending through a moonscape countryside to a -- town! Where people had been living all these years, and to some forlorn little Catholic church up a side street just in time for the ten-thirty mass..." But that "little" says it all (cf. the dozen "little"s in the Prioress' Tale), not of miniaturizing but of diminishing into sentimentality; I'll take "abscissa and ordinate" any time; terrific names for a pair of twins... (

I have been here alone (with two cats) for ten days, & have never been happier. I was going ^{am} to write a long letter about here, now, but it's already 10:15, and the letter would sound self-centered, when the point is that that center is clarified and (momentarily) without the interferences of anger/worry/fear/desire/hate etc. Maybe I'll write later about how I fell through the ground and other sundry adventures. Meanwhile I'll walk ~~h~~his down the lane and leave it for the postman.

Love to you and all,

Bill